

Research paper on charles gravier comte de vergennes and the american revolution

[History](#), [Revolution](#)



Charles Gravier comte de Vergennes was a French diplomat and Statesman. As a diplomat he served in Constantinople, Trier and Stockholm as ambassador. During Louis XIV's reign, he was appointed as foreign minister of France in 1774. Charles Gravier was one of the main French supporters of American Revolution. Initially, the support was in secret through Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais who was his secret agent. The French later made their support public after an agreement between the American colonist delegation led by Benjamin Franklin and France. Vergennes role in the Franco-American alliance aided the American cause by providing military, munitions and financial aid to the colonists.

The Franco-American alliance of 6th February 1778 was an agreement between France and the United States for the supply of military aid and loans to its thirteen colonies. The agreement is regarded as the most impactful occurrence in the United States struggle for independence. The decision by France to assist the U. S was attributed to her resentment towards Britain due to the loss of her North American colony after the Seven Year's War (1754-1763). By supporting the US in the war, the French sought to undermine the British influence in the New World and also raise France to a position of superior influence and consideration.

Initially in the period between 1775 and 1777, France maintained what was perceived as a neutral position but in the real sense was already making secret deliveries of loans and munitions to the Americans. In 1776, the Continental Congress sent a diplomatic team to the Bourbon monarchy to request for financial aid and seek recognition as an independent nation. The diplomatic team comprised of Benjamin Franklin, Arthur Lee and Silas Deane.

On 17th October 1777, the colonists defeated British Imperialist forces at the Battle of Saratoga. This victory was important as it showed the colonists will to pursue the war for freedom to the bitter end. With the victory, France was convinced towards helping the revolutionaries in their war.

The defeat was also of concern to the British who hurriedly sent a delegation to the Americans, of the Carlisle Commission, to negotiate for peace. The French acted in haste and sent foreign minister Charles Gravier comte de Vergennes to sign an agreement between France and the colonists. The alliance was concluded in February of 1778. Vergennes helped to sign two treaties. First was a treaty of Amity and Commerce. The treaty was an official recognition of the United States as a new country and also encouraged trade between America and France. According to the treaty, the two countries gave each other a most favoured status. The idea behind the treaty was to provoke the Great Britain into declaring war against the French.

The second treaty was for a Franco-American military alliance against Great Britain in case of war. The treaty also included a peace condition that required recognition the United States as an absolute independent nation.

This peace could only be arrived at through mutual consent between the United States and France. Another aspect of the treaties was a requirement that France renounces all her North American territorial claims east of the Mississippi River, Bermuda and a guarantee of all U. S. boundaries as at the end of the war in exchange for French possession of the West Indies.

The Franco-American alliance facilitated by Vergennes was a great contributor towards America's independence. The 1778 treaties also helped the United States gain recognition as a nation among other nations. France

employed her fleet to challenge Great Britain for control of North American seas. The arms and troops provided by France were instrumental in aiding the revolutionaries win the war against Great Britain. In 1781, the colonists defeated British Imperial forces at the Siege of Yorktown. The defeat effectively brought the war to an end. Vergennes also represented France at the peace negotiations between the United States, Great Britain, Spain and France which led to signing of the Paris Treaty of 1783.

Charles Gravier comte de Vergennes began to advocate for French intervention in the American revolution as early as eight months into the war in December 1775. He suggested to the French government that France provides secret financial aid to the American revolutionists. Vergennes wanted to avenge France's defeat by Great Britain in the Seven Years' War by ensuring her defeat at the hands of the Americans. France's comptroller general, Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot greatly opposed the proposals brought forward by Vergennes with regard to interference in the American war. However, Vergennes was able to convince the king into supporting his idea. Vergennes aided the American cause by facilitating provision of military and financial aid to the colonists. His first step was to convince King Louis XIV into supporting the revolutionists which he did albeit through a lot of convincing. Vergennes persuaded the French government to agree to an approach that he considered safe and practical. According to the approach, France would provide secret assistance to the colonists. France set aside 1 million livres for this purpose. Vergennes also approached the Marquis Grimaldi of Spain for a partnership who also forwarded an additional 1 million livres.

Vergennes recruited Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais, a brilliant French spy to develop a way to funnel funds to the Americans. Beaumarchais set up a company by the name Roderigue Hortalez and Company which the French used as a front to provide financial aid to the colonists. The funds were instrumental in the purchase of supplies and military equipment by the Americans. With a constant supply of weaponry, munitions and basic supplies, the colonists were able to maintain a steady series of battles against British Imperialist forces.

Beaumarchais was also an effective arms smuggler. Vergennes used his brilliance to ensure that France supplied munitions for the war. His determination to see Great Britain face defeat meant that he constantly monitored the war and ensured that necessary supplies were provided. The company set up by Beaumarchais, Hortalez and Company, supplied 80% percent of gun powder that the American revolutionists used in the two years of war. In addition to this, the company also smuggled weapons for the colonists.

As a professional diplomat, Vergennes was able to measure the ability of the American army in sustaining the war and often intervened when necessary. As early as 1777, the French government had already set up an expeditionary force ready to be sent to America in case the American forces faced serious challenges in fighting the British. Later during the war, a joint French-Spanish plan to invade Great Britain and in effect end the American war was aborted. This was followed by reports of possible collapse of the American army. At this point, the French expeditionary force came in handy and was immediately dispatched to America.

Vergennes Spanish diplomacy also convinced a generally neutral Spain to join the American war in mid 1779. Spain had been reluctant to join the war from its initial stages and preferred to stay neutral. Spain provided its naval fleet for the war. The combination of French and Spanish naval fleet was sufficient to intimidate the British fleet. Vergennes also established diplomatic negotiations with the Dutch as secured their assistance in provision of supplies to the American colonists.

Overall, Charles Gravier comte de Vergennes' brilliance in diplomacy and negotiations was an essential contributor to signing of the Franco-American Alliance. Vergennes role in the Franco-American alliance aided the American cause by providing military, munitions and financial aid to the colonists. His role in negotiating and implementing the terms of the agreement was crucial in aiding the American cause.

Bibliography

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